

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
REGULAR MEETING
AUGUST 22, 2017
121 N. 4TH. ST., WEST BRANCH, MI 48661

- I. Member Joanne Bennett called the meeting to order at 12:10 pm.
- II. Present- Autumn Hunter, Samantha Fabbri, Joe Clark, Joanne Bennett, Sandy Rabidue, Mayor Lawrence.
Absent - Rusty Showalter, Jayson Stroebel, Dora Zapczynski.
Others Present - GPSCR Coordinator, Kelli Collins; City Manager, Heather Grace.
- III. **Additions to Agenda -**
Manager Grace requested permission to schedule administratively a direct water hookup at the Fireman's Monument for use by the volunteers to water the plants and flowers. This would eliminate the awkward and grueling task of dragging the heavy garden hoses across the parking lot to water. An appreciation luncheon date was discussed and agreed to schedule for sometime in September.

Manager Grace also stated at the City Council meeting on Monday, August 21, the Victorian Font and Theme was questioned. Concerns and reservations were discussed about what "Victorian" really describes and does Victorian demonstrate what our downtown is? Several members expressed pros and cons of a Victorian Theme. Grace expressed her difficulty as Zoning Administrator in determining whether to keep the Victorian Theme, or when asked for an exemption, granting it for fear of chasing new businesses away. A discussion was held by DDA members and agreed this needs to be addressed for potential situations. It was decided to continue with an exchange of ideas and talk about the future of continuing/discontinuing/or re-branding the Victorian Theme/Fonts.

Bennett brought up the discussion last month on the Roger Brooks Webinars. At the last DDA meeting it was agreed to re-examine this topic after viewing the First Webinar. Fabbri advised she contacted them and there is no limit to the number of people/viewings allowed for the webinars. The total cost for the series of the Roger Brooks Webinars is \$540.

Motion by Bennett to purchase the one year contract for \$540 to access Roger Brooks Webinars. Second by Rabidue.

Yes - Autumn Hunter, Samantha Fabbri, Joe Clark, Joanne Bennett, Sandy Rabidue, Mayor Lawrence.

No - None.

Absent - Rusty Showalter, Jayson Stroebel, Dora Zapczynski

Motion voted and carried.

- IV. **Minutes -**
Minutes of the July 27, 2017 meeting were reviewed.
Motion by Fabbri to approve the minutes as presented. Second by Rabidue.
Yes - Autumn Hunter, Samantha Fabbri, Joe Clark, Joanne Bennett, Sandy Rabidue, Mayor Lawrence.
No - None.
Absent - Rusty Showalter, Jayson Stroebel, Dora Zapczynski

Motion voted and carried.

V. **Bills -**

Grace brought to attention the Spectrum bill which was paid but not approved in the amount of \$1,079.76. This is an annual bill for internet service at the Pocket Park. Grace advised she previously was led to believe internet service was required for the security cameras to operate. The security cameras do not need wifi to operate..they operate independently and record to a DVR. Grace informed if the DDA desired to discontinue this service we can contact Spectrum to have a credit applied to a city account and removed from the DDA Budget line amount.

Motion by Fabbri to cancel Spectrum internet service at the Pocket Park and remove this item from DDA budget. Second by Clark.

Yes - Autumn Hunter, Samantha Fabbri, Joe Clark, Joanne Bennett, Sandy Rabidue, Mayor Lawrence.

No - None.

Absent - Rusty Showalter, Jayson Stroebel, Dora Zapczynski

Motion voted and carried.

Bennett presented all bills paid but not approved in addition to Topsy Bear Bistro for the amount of \$42.40.

Motion by Fabbri to pay all bills as presented. Second by Rabidue.

Yes - Autumn Hunter, Samantha Fabbri, Joe Clark, Joanne Bennett, Sandy Rabidue, Mayor Lawrence.

No - None.

Absent - Rusty Showalter, Jayson Stroebel, Dora Zapczynski

Motion voted and carried.

VI. **Bids - None.**

VII. **Reports and/or comments -**

Chairman - None

Member Reports -

Bennett discussed again the responsibilities of the DDA for maintenance of lights downtown. She believes this should be a City responsibility and feels the DDA is to develop downtown - not maintain it. Grace explained the current way it is operating is typical of other DDA's - if both Council and DDA wish to change it - it would have to be a decision of both entities. Other members articulated their concern of projects they have done which added an abundance of additional on-going expenses which could be maintained by the City. Grace stated it has to be a policy decision because it affects the city's budget and to do this would be a cut to other city services. Council would have to decide if they wish to subsidize the downtown area by maintaining it with general city funds at the expense of other sections of the City budget which would be a policy decision by Council. Many felt the DDA is not accomplishing anything. Some questioned what would happen if the DDA did not exist? Lawrence stated some council members were not in favor of the Pocket Park and the extension of the River Walk. Rabidue maintained the Pocket Park and Public Restrooms are an asset to the downtown area. Hunter stated she observes many people gathering at the Pocket Park throughout the year. Other members agreed we must continue to improve and beautify our town if we wish to create more business and draw customers to the area.

City Manager - None.

VIII. **New Business -**

Grace made aware to the DDA of a letter she requested Collins, GPSCR Coordinator, send to West Branch Township asking for copies of all documents (including invoices, billings, financial papers, etc.), relating to the Loop Group/Wayfinding Signs Project for documentation in the event of a potential Federal Audit or anything similar. DDA members questioned what they could do if they do not comply? Grace said since the DDA contributed \$3000 towards this project (approximately 3 years ago), if they do not comply, she would send a legal request for a refund of the \$3000.

Discussion was held on the resume for the open DDA position received from Tracy Williams. Ms. Williams is the Banking Center Manager of Chemical Bank in West Branch. The number of positions and eligibility were briefly discussed.

Motion by Rabidue to recommend appointing Tracy Williams to fill the vacant position for the DDA. Second by Clark.

Yes - Autumn Hunter, Samantha Fabbri, Joe Clark, Joanne Bennett, Sandy Rabidue, Mayor Lawrence.

No - None.

Absent - Rusty Showalter, Jayson Stroebel, Dora Zapczynski

Motion voted and carried.

IX. **Old Business -**

Letter was received from Ethan Resteiner- The Highway Brewing Company - requesting a refund of his \$2000 deposit for the Facade Grant and notifying he is withdrawing from the program. Since only one business remains the entire project is not eligible as two businesses are required to participate. Bennett questioned when the other participants whom have withdrawn and been approved will receive their refund? Grace stated it should be presented at the next Council meeting. Grace asked the DDA if they would consider another round of the Facade Program in the future with the facts and things they have learned from the first round. One obstacle and issue to consider is the fact that SHPO granted eligibility for West Branch as a historical district.

Motion by Rabidue to accept the withdrawal letter from the Facade Program for Ethan Resteiner - The Highway Brewing Company and refund his \$2000. Second by Fabbri.

Yes - Autumn Hunter, Samantha Fabbri, Joe Clark, Joanne Bennett, Sandy Rabidue, Mayor Lawrence.

No - None.

Absent - Rusty Showalter, Jayson Stroebel, Dora Zapczynski

Motion voted and carried.

Motion by Rabidue to refund Jane Schwartz her \$2000 deposit for the Facade Program due to not enough participants remaining to be eligible. Second by Clark.

Yes - Autumn Hunter, Samantha Fabbri, Joe Clark, Joanne Bennett, Sandy Rabidue, Mayor Lawrence.

No - None.

Absent - Rusty Showalter, Jayson Stroebel, Dora Zapczynski

Motion voted and carried.

Fabbri reminded everyone of the 2nd Roger Brooks Webinar to be presented at the City Police on Tuesday, August 22.

X. **Public Comment** - none.

XI. **Adjournment** -
Bennett adjourned the meeting at 12:59 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kelli Collins
GPSCR Coordinator